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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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SUBJECT The Handling of Photo Equipment and Supplies in
the Soviet Air Force (SAF)

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- 1.Q. How did the Soviet Air Force handle the supply of photographic equipment and supplies in the 24th VA Aerial Photography Service: paper, film, developer and other chemicals, etc?
- A. The 24th VA (Air Army) had one aerial photography company. This company received all necessary supplies from the 24th VA Main Supply dump, (GAS). The advance air stores depot of the 24th VA, received its supplies from the central VVS depot. The Aerial Photography Company, of the 24th VA, was provided with storage facilities where it kept its own supplies after drawing them from the 24th VA Main Supply Depot. This company furnished all necessary photographic supplies to its own detachments which were assigned operationally to various units of the 24th VA. Also, these detachments were equipped with one or two mobile photo labs (PAFL-Mobile Photolaboratory.)
- 2.Q. What method was used, by the Aerial Photography Section in the 24th VA, in processing its films?
- A. In the Fighter Air Division (IAD), there was one squadron which, in addition to its normal functions, carried on day-time air reconnaissance under various weather

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conditions from medium and high altitudes.

An Air Fighter Regiment, which contained a reconnaissance squadron was always stationed near the headquarters of the Fighter Air Division so that immediately after each reconnaissance mission, the films could be processed and the information so obtained made available to the division headquarters.

Besides Mobile Photo Labs, the Photo-reconnaissance Section also had a stationary photo-lab located near the air field. In addition to the above, each Air Fighter Regiment had a small photo-lab manned by one photo-mechanic. At times when the work-load was light, the Regimental photo-mechanic did all of the loading and unloading of camera adapters. However, when the photo-reconnaissance activities were more intense, the Photo Section of the IAD took over these duties. All of the film processing was done by the photo section of the IAD, and the following procedures were followed: After the aircraft landed, after the air reconnaissance mission, the photo-mechanic or the lab technician extracted the adapter with exposed film and carried it to the photo laboratory, where it was developed and interpreted.

Normal procedure was used in processing the film, i.e. developer, water, hypo, then alcohol for fast drying. When the film was dry, prints were made (also washed in alcohol for quick drying) from which mosaic charts were prepared. Photo-interpretation was performed prior to, or during the time mosaics were being prepared.

Each BAP (Bomber Air Regiment) had a Photo-Section which was engaged in processing the films showing bombing results or the film brought back by the reconnaissance crews. These Photo-Sections were essentially the same as the Aerial Photo-Sections in the Fighter Air Division, and the same procedure was used in processing the films. It is necessary to keep in mind that the Photo-Section, in the Fighter Aerial Division, did not process the FKP (Aircraft Cine-Camera gun) film. For this purpose, each Fighter Air Regiment had a photo-mechanic who loaded and unloaded the "FKP" and processed the films. After the film was developed, he took it to the Squadron Commander who, together with his Flight Commander, examined the film and decided which exposures were to be reprinted and in what quantities. The photo-mechanic returned to his lab and produced as many prints of each exposure as directed. When the prints were ready, the photo-mechanic took the film and all the prints to the Squadron Commander (of the adjutant). Many times, the Squadron Photogrammatrist took over the finished prints. He made the necessary annotations on all of the prints. After this was completed, he pasted these prints in each pilot's Air Gunnery Ledger and wrote a legend under each print. When the above was completed, the flight commanders wrote, under these prints, the flier's proficiency ratings. (The ratings were designated by numbers from 1 to 5 as follows:

(1 -- very poor; 2 -- poor; 3 -- fair; 4 -- good; 5 -- very good.)

The commander determined, and informed, the ratings of fliers under his command only. The Flight Commander's rating was determined by the Squadron Commander.

The photo-mechanic of the Fighter Air Regiment received his supplies, such as photo-paper, film, chemicals and equipment, from the Photo-Section of the IAD. This mechanic had to take monthly inventory of all his stock and equipment. In the Ground Attack and the Bomber Regiments, the handling and processing of film from the FKP was done by the Regimental Photo-Section.

The above information is based on peace time activities, i.e., present activities. The procedures are somewhat different during war. The differences between peace-time and war-time procedures are not covered in this report.

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